

Neighborhood Meeting: ISD High School & Elementary School
April 28, 2021

**Neighborhood Meeting:
ISD High School #4 and Elementary School #17
April 28, 2021**

6:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

Staff in Attendance:

Lucy Sloman, Land Development Manager
Cristina Haworth, Planning Consultant
Thomas Rush, Communications Coordinator

Applicant Team:

Todd Sawin, Civil Engineer, AHBL
Tom Mullins, Director of Capital Projects, Issaquah School District
Michael Davis, Architect, Bassetti Architects
Meryl Kamowski, Sr. Ecologist, Wetland Resources

PURPOSE: *The Community Planning and Development Department is hosting a meeting to allow the community an opportunity to understand the proposal with particular focus on critical areas and provide the City with thoughts and concerns before a decision is rendered. The applicant, along with technical experts, will be present to answer questions and address issues of interested members.*

Introduction

Haworth opened the meeting at 6:31 PM. She explained the purpose of tonight's meeting, the virtual format of the meeting, and the permit process, including opportunities for public review and comment.

Applicant Presentation: Critical Areas

Davis made the applicant's presentation, including the design story (concept) and proposed site plan. Sawin continued the applicant's presentation on the critical areas of the site and recent changes in the plan to the buffer and tree-save area.

Comments, Questions and Concerns: Critical Areas

Connie Marsh: Allowing only three minutes to speak is inadequate [crazy]. I mostly heard the same presentation as was given before; it's hard to understand what huge improvements have been made. Mostly unspecific information. You talk about filling in a wetland but you haven't shown how or why you couldn't reduce development to save the wetland. How could you not save a little wetland at the edge; it must be because you are flipping the sides of the site, with dubious soils. When you do all of this soil moving, I don't see how it is not going to change the entire site hydrology. I don't see how you can maintain the hydrology there.

Also, the applicant is requesting a two- to three-percent allowance for additional tree removal in an Administrative Adjustment of Standards (AAS), but how many DBH inches, or how many trees, is that. It's hard to tell the scale of what's being requested. In the hydrology portion, as trees grow, the hydrology will constantly change as new trees suck up water. I don't see how you can maintain those wetlands.

Sawin: *The intent is to make an equivalent wetland as it currently discharges, similar to when the college discharged to that site, to maintain a similar amount of water and how it got there.*

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On the tree-save issue, we are asking for a reduction to 23 instead of 25 percent of the trees. The DBH on site is 18,000 inches, so it amounts to about 1,400 inches of tree difference. If the City removed 3,000 inches of dead trees we would meet the code. If the dead trees were left, they could be maintained as providing habitat, but it would not be a good use of development to try to save those trees. The hydrology plans are within the requirements of the City's standards, and are modeled on the Washington State hydrologic model, with runoff peaks and durations within State Hydrology Manual standards. Water on the site may move laterally but long-term infiltration is not recommended due to site conditions. The systems have been designed in conformance with City and State standards at both sites.

Connie Marsh: The intent is to do something good as opposed to just following rules and regulations. You seem to be going by just the minimum requirements. I'm asking that because you are influencing kids and setting the school district's responsibility into perpetuity, ask yourself whether this will be self-sustaining over time, so kids can see the school district and City are doing the right thing. ISD has barely moved toward doing the right thing. So far the plan is to take down trees, remove habitat, and influence critical areas. It's frustrating to hear the minimum requirements quoted back to me as "doing the right thing."

The site plan has two exits off this property, one at Providence Point, and the other one you say will continue to go to Jacob's Creek. On the City water going to Providence Point, the manual says you aren't supposed to change the direction of stormwater, especially when it leads to a salmonid-bearing stream. I don't understand why you are doing that, and that will be a future question to you from me. I don't see how that is legal.

When you talk about trees, dead trees and live trees, you are talking about a massive number. There are things you can do with the trees you take down. The Mountains to Sound Greenway (MTSG) is looking for dead trees. So that's one beneficial thing you could do with some of your tree removal. Try to do something awesome. An interesting thing about infiltration is you will need to manage the water levels of your soils; they are compressing. Having dealt with water and hills, when water hits some of those till levels, it wants to go sideways into unexpected places. I don't understand the underground water motion, even your TSCE, when water moves a lot below into a ditch system, it is heaping up large amounts of water because of the till. I request a doubling-down of TSCE and being hyper-vigilant on that. I didn't see the applicant address the idea of development shrinking to avoid these impacts, and that will be part of your Master Site Plan conversation with me also.

Sawin: *We are working with the City and the contractor, who by the way is design-build, on the stormwater approach. The contractor is very risk averse during construction. We will meet all permit requirements as needed. Some of the changes made to the plan after the last community meeting are providing structured parking at 65 percent from 50 percent; site changes to the baseball fields, access roads, and tennis court; and pushing the elementary school and improvements around it east toward 228th to create additional buffer.*

Roberta Brown: Have a question about the cost for purchase of a .04 credit at the East Sammamish Wetland Mitigation bank. What is going to be mitigated for that. On page 4 of the handout, under #2, it says that "The impacts to Wetland C may be allowed by code due to its size, lack of connectivity to a wetland complex, and proposed mitigation," which is probably not true. It also says that "information on how the impacts are both unavoidable and necessary has not been provided." That information should have been provided before this public hearing. Why have the public hearing when this information is not provided. Obviously, the impacts are not "unavoidable." We don't need another grade school; we don't have the population for it. What

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are the costs, and when will the analysis be available for what makes this project unavoidable and necessary.

Haworth: *Tonight's meeting is an environmental neighborhood meeting and not a public hearing, which is where the public hearing record is created.*

Kamowski: *We are using the East Sammamish Wetland Mitigation Bank, which was created by King County for the Jacobs Creek sub-basin. To the east of where the school campus will be located is a restoration enhancement area, and ISD will pay a fee for doing that work. We contacted King County about using a local bank, and that's why the East Sammamish Wetland Mitigation Bank was chosen.*

Sawin: *There was no place to relocate the access along 228th SE, so we needed to widen that access to make the site work. We did look at alternatives, including as you move north along that roadway, and the payment that Kamowski just described was the recommended approach.*

Kamowski: *The price was about \$33,500, and it was a significantly cheaper option. Also, the wetland there is narrow, and is a linear site that is functioning as a roadway ditch. Any impact either upslope or down slope would impact the stormwater system anyway. The hydrological system will continue to flow into the stormwater system.*

David Kaplan: *I'm skeptical of the school-in-a-park concept. I've been on the site several times. Much of the property is covered in blackberries, tansy ragwort, invasive species, and some not-so-great trees. A lot of replacement work will be needed. We have been trying to get ISD to commit to long-term maintenance for years; it's been a long-standing issue and years of frustration. Also I assume the high school will have cross-country teams. Where will they be running; it won't be just on the track or the roads, but also on trails in the woods. The trails will also attract people from the neighborhood for walking. So a trail system should be part of the plan, and not just asphalt and concrete. As Connie Marsh mentioned, MTSG is looking for large woody debris, like dead cedars. So that is one potential mitigation that could make a big difference. Trucking would be close, and the trees will have to come out because of where they are and/or their condition.*

Sawin: *We will look into reusing trees; we are definitely looking for ways to reuse materials onsite, and trying to do our part to utilize the resources we have. We have discussed trails with the City and ISD. There are some safety concerns with kids and others walking there, such as creating areas where supervision of trails will be difficult--less so on the south side. Some trails already exist. ISD doesn't intend to maintain trails. We understand the need for maintenance, and ISD has a lot of properties to maintain. The buffer will eat up ISD's time and resources to maintain, and ISD understands that. The intent is to keep it as natural as possible. We are working with the City on that part of the project now. We will have a formal agreement, but for now we are still working through the maintenance issues.*

Kappler: *The buffer area borders against Providence Point, and they will be very interested in the buffers over time.*

Sawin: *We will be enhancing the buffers, removing blackberries, and providing trees. Hopefully the result will be better buffers than what exists today.*

Mary Derailus: *Will tree mitigation happen on site, or in other areas of the City.*

Sawin: *The proposal is to mitigate 100 percent on site, and not somewhere else in the City.*

Dave Osmer: *The site map provided with the meeting notice is unreadable. What is the City going to do to provide large scale, useful drawings of this project before the Development [Design] Commission hearing.*

Sloman: *This concern has been raised before. We have contacted a number of facilities, ISD, the library system, the City fire station, and so on, and so far we have been unable to locate a*

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facility that we can open to the public. Hopefully, before the public hearing we will be in a Covid phase so that we can open City Hall, where we can welcome the public and make large monitors available to the public then. But at this time we have been unable to come up with a solution that would make them available.

Dave Osmer: It is ridiculous, for a project of this size, not to have the documents and maps be fully reviewed by the public. We won't be out of Phase 3 by the hearing, and may be back to Phase 2. There has got to be a better way.

Sloman: *Please contact me personally. We understand your concern, and I'd be glad to speak with you directly about a solution.*

Michele Williams: So far we have heard about water and trees; I'd like to make a few comments about the kids who will be attending these schools. I am a former elementary school principal, and I have never heard of an elementary school being positioned next to a high school. I'm worried about traffic on 228th pulling into the school. I can foresee busy parents dropping off young kids, with teen drivers on the road. The elementary school kids can't walk or bike to this school, so they need to be dropped off. There is already congestion on 228th. How does the district plan to mitigate the exceptional traffic that will be happening.

Haworth: *We are holding comments on traffic to the end of the meeting.*

Applicant Presentation: Traffic

Sawin: We are still working through the traffic analysis. We are providing frontage improvements, as well as improvements at the proposed intersection. We are working through the issues now with the City of Sammamish and Issaquah.

Comments, Questions, and Concerns: Traffic

Mullins: *A comment about an earlier question...The two schools, the elementary school and the high school, will have different start times, so traffic will be staggered. There is a 20 to 30 minute time frame for each starting time.*

Michele Williams: I understand that, and it doesn't make any sense that there will be overlapping times for all these students, with band practice after school and before-school activities. I have heard that comment before and it doesn't make sense to me.

Question: How do you plan to mitigate traffic on busy 228th, with drivers dropping off kids, teen drivers, etc.

Sawin: *We are trying to get people off the road as quickly as possible, so drivers will be coming onto the site and into the high school first. Student drivers will be first, and will park in the parking structure. We will be getting the majority of drivers off the road as quickly as possible. Buses will continue to the back of the site for drop-off. For the elementary school drop off, buses will use the inside lane, and parents will use the outside lane. Elementary school parents won't impact the ability of drivers to come and go to and from the high school. Buses leaving the site will have priority. Others will have stop signs and signs giving buses priority, which is a way to promote bus ridership. That will allow traffic to keep moving, with people getting dropped off several blocks way. We think the plan does a good job of that, and that people can drop off and then merge, which will keep traffic flowing without long queues.*

Question: Will a signal be installed at Bellwood, making ingress and egress difficult, including for emergency vehicles.

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Sawin: We have talked to the City of Sammamish extensively about this, and the right answer is to provide a traffic light or channelization. Cut-through traffic there is a concern, and a light is needed at the high school. We believe there will be gaps in traffic as the light cycles, which will allow cars to turn without worrying about southbound vehicles. There are issues with how it functions today, and one approach we are proposing is channelization and not a signal, but that is not final at this point.

Question: On the issue of cars and buses idling, does the City have code that applies to exhaust from cars and buses. Please follow up.

Haworth: I will follow up on that.

Question: I notice that idling is to be discouraged when cars are lined up to pick up and drop off. How successful has that been at other schools.

Mullins: Idling is discouraged by signage and by staff at the schools. I can't tell you how successful that has been at each school, but idling is something we discourage. Also, our fleet of buses are clean-burning diesel buses, and are very efficient in terms of exhaust.

Sawin: Signs to discourage idling is used by many schools. As people get used to doing so, it becomes common. Also newer cars turn off when stopped. What we are seeing is a societal change, kind of like "shaming" people into changing behavior like was done about wearing a mask. It's been better in the last few years, and is a trend we are seeing.

Question: Please explain why this project is needed. The schools are experiencing under-enrollment, and there is a high school nearby with expensive athletic facilities.

Mullins: In 2016, the school district promised voters to expand school capacity. Right now we have over 200 portable classrooms in the district, which are not considered permanent housing. Two of our three high schools are overcrowded. Overall, the voter electorate approved by over 70 percent to approve these schools. We do expect enrollment to get back to normal after Covid. If we wait to build, our build prices go up and schools are already overcrowded. So we are doing as voters directed.

Question: Will traffic from large sporting events, graduation, concerts, and so on be handled adequately by on-campus parking.

Sawin: We expect a maximum capacity of the football field to be 2,000 people; that ends up being a 667 parking-stall requirement under the City's standards. We have provided that with some additional parking to exceed the requirement. We don't think events will be beyond that need. Also, from the traffic analysis done for sporting events and other events at either school, we believe 667 exceeds the need for onsite parking. ISD also agreed not to schedule events at both schools at the same time. There isn't really any nearby parking, so parking does need to be onsite.

Question: The traffic study didn't mention the roadway at 228th and the Providence Point/Bellwood driveway. That is not a residential, but rather a commercial driveway. What mitigation are you providing for this area.

Sawin: The traffic report does show where people will back up from the proposed signal and queuing proposal. It is not covered because we don't believe it will cause any impacts to entering those sites.

Tim Brown: I'd like to address the arborist report, specifically tree removal. The conclusion is that large traditional pines, firs, hemlocks, all those trees are declining because of fires and environmental pressures. The proposal recommends that 82 percent of the onsite trees be cut. So this is saying that 82 percent of the trees on the site need to be cut because of global

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warming. I find this ludicrous. That's not to say that this spot is any worse than any other spot in the Northwest; declining forests, stressed forests. Therefore 82 percent can be cut down. So anybody can go around the City and cut 82 percent of trees on a site because they are declining. The trees have no illness, no disease. This is our new normal, and it can't be used as a rationale to cut massive amounts of trees.

Sawin: *Trees on the site have taken a downturn. We have tried to save trees where it makes sense, especially by trying to get large swaths that will create a natural buffer that will actually mitigate and help. We are hopeful as we remove trees that we pick the right ones and save the healthy ones. By the way, 82 percent was an older number; it is now about 77 percent.*

Tim Brown: The number I used is the number in the report we are reviewing. Stressed trees as a rationale to remove them is a dangerous precedent that should not be allowed. It will negate all tree retention regulations.

Sawin: *This is not final yet; it is an ongoing process.*

Question: Will start times be the same as at Pine Lake Middle School. The traffic there backs up.

Mullins: *We will try to keep start times different by 25 or 20 minutes. These schools are not built yet, but we will strive to have them be different from each other and from Pine Lake. Also, they share some buses so times have to be different.*

Mary Derailus: In the part of the parking structure underground, what is the plan for student security who use that lower level.

Mullins: *We will have cameras and onsite security staff. This is new for the school district, and is a requirement by the City. We will implement rules to ensure safety for students as much as possible. The structure, by the way, is open on three sides, so it is not completely enclosed.*

Question: Why are portables in the current plan, and where will the overall student population be coming from.

Mullins: *Portables are required by the State to be included in the design of a school while waiting for capacity to be built to serve the population. They are a relatively inexpensive way to provide classroom space, and can be moved from school to school. On the question of the overall population for the new schools, I don't have the map with me, but it can be provided that shows assumed boundaries for the elementary school and the high school. High school students are coming from Eastlake and Skyline high schools.*

Question: Why didn't ISD consider the City-owned 40 acres at the bottom of the hill at East Lake Sammamish Parkway.

Mullins: *I'm not aware of that parcel. It wasn't in our ability to purchase it from the City; it was not on the market when we purchased property. I'm not sure if it's a buildable site.*

Question: Please look into it and let the public know. Also, if you don't have attendance maps, how can you do a valid traffic analysis.

Sawin: *We do have the maps. There is a process to set boundaries. In the meantime, the team and ISD did an educated guess as to where the boundaries will be, and that is what is used in the traffic report. That information is part of the overall land use record, and we can provide that information to the Development [Design] Commission.*

Question: The plan incentivizes bus traffic, but all those buses make exhaust, and there will be kids waiting to be picked up and also walking.

Sawin: *The buses have a schedule to keep. Hopefully the buses will be waiting and when kids are released, the buses can leave before other kids get into their cars and/or start walking.*

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Mullins: I have some information now about the 40 acre site... It is substantially a wet parcel and that, plus based on its being a historical slide zone, means we would not have considered purchasing it. Also, we consider a bus equal to about 50 cars—a bus holds about 50 kids. So we promote them for that reason.

Conclusion/Adjournment

Haworth outlined the next steps in the review process. She explained how comments given tonight will be used, and noted that a date for a public hearing at the Development Commission has not yet been set.

With no additional requests to speak or additional comments, the meeting was concluded at 8:15 PM.

/sl